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MARK TWAIN.

Mark Twain since his return to the United States has been received with open arms by his countrymen, and has been praised and feted by all. But the shower of praise, says the Literary Digest, has aroused the ire of Harry Thurston Peck, who gives vent to his feelings in the Bookman. Mr. Peck considers that Mark Twain has "gone off." The attack is on Mark Twain in part, and also upon contemporary criticism. That Mr. Peck is an able writer many readers know. But he may be as wrong in one direction, as the critics he criticizes are wrong in another. But it may be as well to quote the criticism. Mr. Peck says:

"Putting aside all prejudice and looking at his work in a purely achromatic way, a critical and truthful judgment upon Mark Twain can be summed up in a very exiguous space. Mark Twain is first and last and all the time, so far as he is anything, a humorist and nothing more. He wrote 'The Jumping Frog' and 'Innocents Abroad' and 'Toughing It,' and these are all the real books that he ever wrote. He set forth the typical American characters of Colonel Sellers and Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, and these are all the real characters that he ever drew. His later publications that are humorous in intention contain many gleams of the old Mark Twain; but, taken as entities, you can not read them from beginning to end. Some unduly optimistic persons who are fond of literary cults grown under glass have tried very hard to make the world believe that Mr. Clemens has great gifts as a serious novelist and romancer. By dint of iteration the world, perhaps, has temporarily come to think that this is true; but, all the same, it will not read these novels and romances, and it thereby shows that common sense and real discrimination may exist in practice even while they hold no place in theory. A hundred years from now it is very likely that 'The Jumping Frog' alone will be remembered, just as out of all that Robert Louis Stevenson composed, the world will ultimately keep in memory the single tale of 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.'

"This spasmodic and ephemeral outburst of enthusiasm over Mr. Clemens emphasizes for the thousandth time a melancholy truth about contemporary criticism. When a writer is doing good and forceful work and winning readers and laying the foundation and erecting the superstructure of an enviable reputation, our critics, even though they may admire him, have not the 'sand' to say so. They are poor dumb sheep that never dare to take the lead in anything; but they stand around with unintelligent and foolish beatings until some one whom they are not afraid to follow shall tell them what they ought to say. When Kipling was doing his finest work, such as he has never equaled in these later years, the critics did not dare to take him seriously. He was so unconventional and rough and strong that he frightened them; and so they slunk timidly behind their inkstands and said little feeble nothings and joked a little and called him a mere journalist, and then looked around to see if any one was going to hit them. After they had found out that his work was instinct with true genius, and that he was in reality the one real literary phenomenon of the last quarter of our century, they all rushed in at once and spattered him with praise and daubed him over with their flattery, and did their very best to make him seem absurd. By this time, as it happened, Kipling's best had all been done, and he was entering upon a period of a decline which may or may not turn out to be temporary. But the critics were as blind to his decadence as they had been previously blind to his great power; and, therefore, all the things they should have said about his early work they said about his later, so that he has been going on for the last two years receiving praise and admiration that are clearly a misfit. The same thing is quite true concerning Mr. Clemens. In the speeches that he has lately made he has said some things that recalled his earlier humor; but in the majority of his utterances the humor has been forced and the laughter which it has evoked has been extremely hollow. Yet just because it was Mark Twain, and because Mark Twain was once a true, spontaneous, and original humorist, the poor creatures who now write about him believe that everything he says must be amusing and delightful. If they do not feel the fun of it themselves, they think they ought to, and they write about it just as though they did."

Such a criticism of a man like Mark Twain is simply brutal. Because a few weak minded writers have overpraised him, there is no need to make this fierce attack upon the man himself. Time and not Mr. Peck will judge as to which of Mark Twain's work will live. Mark Twain is a veteran in literature, he has given pleasure to hundreds of thousands of readers through-

out the whole English speaking world. He has performed a task similar to what Sir Walter Scott undertook upon the failure of the Ballentynes. He was faced by a mountain of debt and through his own efforts he has paid it off. He has returned to his own country to rest after his labors, and he is met by this snarling criticism.

But has Mark Twain deteriorated, does he show signs of decay. Last year he published 'The man who corrupted Hadleyburg.' The fun of this shows no diminution of the bright Mark Twain of the seventies.

The conception of the story is extremely good, the working of it out is humorous in the extreme. The plan by which the wicked "man" attacked the people of the self righteous little town was most ingenious, and the fact that they fell because they had so carefully kept themselves from temptation added a moral lesson to the humor and the ingenuity. To unite these certainly shows no diminution of power. It rather shows a refinement, a better literary balance, in fact an advance in literary finish upon the work of Mr. Clemens' youth.

Age does not necessarily mean deterioration. We can see this in many cases. The intellect is frequently clear and bright when the body may even be feeble. The last lines that Tennyson wrote are as polished and as beautiful as any that were written in his prime. Age did not dim the intellect of Oliver Wendell Holmes, nor that of Longfellow, nor of Whitier. Statesmen retain their grip upon affairs well into their last years. Lord Salisbury, Gladstone, Palmerston, Emperor William I, Kruger, are all cases in point. Lord Roberts has shown as good generalship at 70 as ever he did in middle age. You have only to look at the Senate of the United States to see how clear and bright intellect can be at advanced ages.

We naturally take a special interest in Mark Twain here, because the turning point in his career occurred just after his visit to these Islands. In fact it was his correspondence from here, which started him out, as it were. That Mark Twain will not lack defenders, and able ones on the Mainland, goes without saying. Mr. Peck has probably aroused a very hornet's nest. But it seems right that some word of protest should come from the Territory of Hawaii, which he described when it was a kingdom, the follies and absurdities of which he keenly saw, but the beauties of which touched the poetic part of his nature.

COMING THEATRICALS.

Honolulu is likely to have some theatrical amusement in the near future. Though the theater is deprecated by some, the bulk of people delight in and are elevated by high class theatrical performances. There are plays and plays, just as there are novels and novels, and poems and poems. Some novels are simply vile, but that does not mean that we should condemn all novels, because there is an immense mass of novels which are in the highest degree amusing. Some poets have prostituted their genius and have written the songs of the very sewer of life, but that does not prevent the purest from studying Milton or Shakespeare, Browning or Tennyson.

Because some plays have an immoral or a prurient tendency, that is no reason why all plays should be condemned. There are hundreds upon hundreds of plays of a poetic, domestic, patriotic and elevating character. Hundreds of plays, which when people have seen and heard them, they feel better for. And on the stage there are cultivated men and women whose career throughout has been as spotless as that of the high minded and virtuous in any walk in life.

If there has been a change for the better anywhere, it has been on the stage during the last century. The drunken and dissipated actor of the early part of last century has been replaced by the polished gentleman, frequently a scholar, who can take his place in any society and has a high ideal of his calling. The actress is a worthy lady, domestic, well educated, frequently a devoted mother. That there are those in the profession who do not come up to this standard is true, but it is also true that pastors have been proved immoral, Sunday School superintendents have been embezzlers, and others who have occupied such positions have been found vicious. Honolulu will look forward with pleasure of its coming theatrical season, and will turn out well in support.

The storm still continues and is making all sorts of difficulties for the inter-island trade. None of the landings exposed to the Kona storm are approachable, and the steamers are having a bad time of it in the channels. Some years ago we had weather similar to this which lasted for weeks. Our prospects for a let up do not seem very good.

It has always been a matter of surprise that the heliograph was not more used. The survey department carried on conversations from Lanai to Maui, and possibly from Maui to Oahu. With telephonic communication it will be a very simple matter to communicate from Island to Island. Messages could be forwarded from Kohala to Hana, thence by telephone to Honolulu or Molokai. Across the channel to Molokai and thence to some point on Oahu. Of course there is the disadvantage of cloudy weather, but the percentage of cloudy days in this climate is very small. The scheme is quite feasible and has often been recommended in the past without avail.

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